

## Grist Mills and Factory at Millbrook

From the time the early settlers took up grants of land in and around Duxbury and for a number of years after the incorporation of the Town in 1637, the grain raised on the land cleared by great labor had to be transported to Plymouth in order to be ground. This was even a greater hardship than raising the grain for transportation by water was uncertain because of weather conditions and to transport it over the roads was even worse, since the latter were mere trails through the forests and at times almost impassible. Hence it is not strange that one of the first things done in the new town was to see that a grist mill was erected.

The site chosen was on what is now known as Millbrook at that time designated as Stony Brook. The location was fairly central and very rarely was there a lack of water, not even in dry times.

Two individuals, Hiller and Pollard were found, who agreed in 1639 to erect a grist mill on this stream at their own expense within a year from date "sufficient to grind corne English and Indian", provided the town would agree "to allow no other mill to be erected in the town until they shall not be able to supply the towns wants". Also it was agreed to grant them other lands, and to permit them to charge a "pottle of corne for grinding every bushell". This agreement was signed in behalf of the town by William Collier, Johnathan Brewster, Christopher Wadsworth and Myles Standish.

The site of this first grist mill is plainly discernible even today (1937). The mill site and the dam stood to the west of the present road and remained there for over one hundred years until 1746 when it was in such poor condition and so unfit for service that it was abandoned and a new grist mill together with a fulling

mill was built to the east of the road by four men, John Southworth, George Partridge, Joshua Delano and Eleazer Harlow.

Myles Standish, William Brewster and the other early pioneers who lived on the peninsular jutting out into Duxbury Bay and known as the "Nook" made their laborious way over rough roads or trails until they reached the trail marked out definitely in 1637 which led from the Jones River ferry through Island Creek by devious ways sticking to the ridges to avoid the swamps till finally through Alden's Farm it reached the first mill referred to above.

Probably not for quite a few years was this road passable except on horse back. In this manner was the grain conveyed to the mill and brought back after being ground. There was no romance connected with it, as when the lady fair rode behind <sup>her</sup> ~~their~~ good man who guided the horse. Just hard work which would be scorned by this present generation which demands white flour delivered at his door. It is difficult to look back at the first hundred years of Duxbury and visualize its scenes and happenings. The men of those times kept few records practically mere chronicles of things done at the town meetings. These early settlers were essentially practical men. They had to be but many of them had difficulty in signing their names to important documents much less writing of the daily events. Thus we have to conjecture largely about certain occurrences, trusting that we are not too much out of the way.

This first mill, as has been stated, lasted a little over one hundred years, (1640-1746), when a fulling mill was built in addition to a grist mill. This was the day of hand looms and in such a mill was conducted the process of cleansing, scouring and pressing woollen goods so as to make the cloth stronger and firmer. The same process is employed in securing the proper texture for felts. Because such a mill existed can be explained the presence of Eleazer Harlow's hatter's shop which was built near the mill, afterwards in 1826



becoming the first unit of the historic Ford's Store.

The second grist mill and the fulling mill changed hands a number of times between their erection in 1746 until in 1810 when they were acquired by Abner Harlow, grandson of Dr. Eleazer Harlow, one of the original owners of the second mill.

Two years later, 1812, Abner Harlow sold the property including dam privileges to the Duxbury Woolen and Cotton Manufacturing Comapny. This company was formed by the two <sup>7</sup> Ezra Westons in order to erect a factory in which to make cloth for the sails of the ships being outfitted in Duxbury. For cloth was unobtainable because of the blockade of the coast by the British war vessels.

So far as can be gleaned from the records it was never a very profitable factory either with or without the grist mill. At one time there were trowels made there and tacks. Old photographs show a small building attached to the south end of the factory in which shoes were made.

At one time there must have been a considerable factory population since an old house on a hill to the south and west of the factory, known as the "boarding house" was enlarged to accommodate them.

One half of the mill was acquired by the Fords in 1864 and the remainder in 1872. Before this ~~(time)~~ from the time the Fords acquired Eleazer Harlow's hatter's shop in 1826 and started their store up to the dates of their actual ownership of the mills and factory, they must have leased the plant for their old account books show they made and sold cloth and various other articles in the factory, conveying them to Baltimore and other ports where they were exchanged for corn which in turn was returned to the mill and ground.

The grist mill was given up by the Fords soon after the railroad came to Duxbury in 1871 as it was no longer profitable. They acquired the Blue Fish River Tide Mill about this time, transferred the machinery to the mill at Millbrook demolishing the <sup>former</sup> mill in 1877. But even the wiping out of a competitor did not suffice for the grist mill at Millbrook ceased operations about the year 1878.

The old factory building, a picturesque old ruin, its windows broken by the stones of boy sharp shooters stood for some years of no use except to harbor tramps. On the fourth of July 1900 it was turned into a grand bonfire by the Town boys and perished with its head still held high for it had lasted nearly a hundred years and had served its purpose, and if they wished to destroy it, so be it. Yet how much better it would have been if kindly citizens with reverence for its past had united for its preservation. But this was not to be and now all that can be done is to mark its site with an appropriate inscription recounting what once has been.

And this marker will be glanced at hurriedly by the motorist who travels the State road, 3A, at forty miles an hour. Over the same route practically as that used by the old pioneers but with what a difference, the changes coming in three hundred years. We would not go back to the inconveniences of those old times even if we could but we can't help wondering where we are going by all this hurry and what will it be like three hundred years from now.

Reuben Peterson, M.D.

Chairman,

Sub Committee on Markers

Duxbury Tercentenary Committee



Quitclaim Deed

Harriet Ford et Al. to Eden W. Soule  
January 9, 1922. at 2 O'clock and 15 minutes P.M.  
Received and entered with Plymouth Co. Register of Deeds  
Book 1400, page 403 & 5. Attest John B. Washburn, Register.  
From the office of Percy L. Walker.

We, Harriet J. Ford and Florence G. Ford both of Duxbury,  
Massachusetts, being unmarried, for consideration Plym. Co.  
paid, grant to Eden W. Soule of said Duxbury Mass. with  
quitclaim covenants, the land in Duxbury Mass. consisting  
of two parcels bounded as follows:

Parcel no. 1) southerly by land of the Duxbury Fire and  
Water District; Westerly by land of Edwin W. Simmons;  
Northerly by land of the grantee and by land of Sidney C.  
Soule and Easterly by Tremont St.: intending hereby to  
to convey and hereby conveying all our right, title and  
interest in the Millpond, so called and in the land under  
and adjoining said Millpond.

(Parcel No 2.) lies on the wasterly side of said Tremont  
Street opposite the first parcel of land herein described  
and is bounded Northerly by land formerly of Ellis Hunt;  
Easterly, by said Hunt land and also Easterly by land of  
Percy L. Walker; Southerly by said land of Walker and Westerly  
by said Street, containing one and four tenths acres more  
or less. Together with all mill and flowage privileges which  
are appurtenant to said parcels and together with the fishing  
privileges as granted to Abner Harlow (a former owner of  
the property hereby conveyed) by act of the General Court in  
the year 1811.

Reserving to Alice S. Leavitt the right to take water from the  
~~Spring on said parcel no 2 as described in deed from Johnathan~~  
springs on said parcel no 2 as described in deed from Johnathan  
S. Ford to said Leavitt dated December 26, 1905 and recorded in  
Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 930, page 98. And also  
~~granting~~ reserving for these grantors the right during their  
lifetime to take water from said springs through pipes or  
otherwise.

Title of these grantors is derived as the only heirs-at-law of  
their father, the late Johnathan S. Ford. Reference may also be  
had to the following deeds. (1) Alden B. Weston to George W. Ford  
(uncle of these grantors) dated April 29, 1963 and recorded in  
Plymouth County Registry of Deeds, Book 316, pages 171 and 172  
(2) Increase Robinson to Johnathan S. Ford et al dated July 1, 1964  
and recorded with said deeds Book 325, Page 139.  
(3) Anselm D. Robinson to Johnathan S. Ford et al, dated June 17,  
1872 and recorded with said deeds Book, 386 Page 272. (4) Sarah  
J. Ford (widow of Said George W. Ford) to these grantors, dated Sept  
5, 1905 and recorded in Plymouth Co, Reg. Of Deeds Book 1163, Page  
414.

Reserving to this grantor the right to take ice from said Mill-  
pond for ten years.

quitclaim deed by Eden W. Soule to Duxbury Fire and Water Dis-  
trict, May 7, 1932. See Registry of Deeds Book 1628 Pages 292  
and 293.

March 25, 1937, Interviewed Eden Soule

Interviewed Eden Soule today. He will be 78 in June. He remembers the old two tide grist mill very well. Jonathan and Geo. Ford bought the mill and took the machinery up to their mill at Millbrook and started a grist mill. Eden used to cart corn from the station to the mill for grist. Previous to this time there had been a Factory there where they made trowels. Sid. Soule says it was not used as a grist mill after 1878. Cheapter to get meal by rail from Boston.

Eden was born in Brookline and moved back to Duxbury when he was about two years old. He looked after his mother in the old house which she willed to him. The house is very old--over 200 years he thinks. DeRibas the photographer, was agreat friend of his.

He never heard of Centennial Hall. He used to plough up the fields, recently bought by the Town from the Alden Estate. In those days owned by the Wrights.

The ell of the mill was used as a shoe shop for many years, he thought after it ceased to be used as a grist mill.



Articles of agreement made and mutually agreed upon the Twenty Second day of January, one thousand Seven hundred and Forty Six by and amongst us, namely, John Southworth, George Partridge, Joshua Delanoe and Eleazer Harlow all of Duxborough, in the County of Plymouth, in New England etc.

Where as the said Southworth is at present the sole owner of a Grist Mill together with stream and lands that may be flowed and all the appurtenances thereto belonging in said Duxborough, called Southworth's Mill &c, and whereas said Mill is become very poor and unfit for service, Now he the said Southworth being freely willing that the said stream may be forever used in the service in the first place and afterwards to improve the water coming from her by any sort of Mill or water works, the owners think most proper to erect below said Grist Mill, and said Southworth hath set forth one half acre of upland between Mendom's Spring and the Millrocks so called a houselot to accommodate a Mill or Mills with all the privilege of damming, digging, flowing ways to and from said Mills together with the whole of the new Grist Mill &c. and for the whole of the Old Mill privilege of pond and ponding, dam and damming, and necessary ways, and the half acre of land with all appurtenances that's needful, the whole is agreed to be worth One hundred and Sixty pounds, old tenor, and we are to improve by flowing down stream if we please, about two rods below Mendom's spring so that there may be a way to pass at all times for Southworth's creatures below the pond to his land on either side of the stream, and not to be stopped by any of our works &c. Forever, of which said premises said Southworth hath given said Partridge, Delanoe and Harlow, a deed of three quarters of the whole and is one quarter for himself.

Now, we the subscribers, agree forthwith agree to build a new Grist Mill and a Fulling Mill, and to set the Grist Mill near the new dam and the Fulling Mill a little below Mendom's Spring, and that they shall be both built and completed, fit for service within eight months next after the above date, each man is to own and carry on one quarter ~~of~~ part of said costs arising thereon and when they are done that then the whole charge on them shall be computed and equally paid by us or our heirs &c.

We also agree that neither of the owners at any time forever shall sell his part unto any person, until they have first given the other owners the preference of sale and on their not complying to give as much as another, then shall the sale be free. We further mutually agree that at any time here after if we or our heirs shall think it proper to build a house on said half acre of land, the better to accommodate said ~~xxx~~ mills, that then the major part of said owners agreeing thereto, shall build such house or housing as they judge most convenient to accommodate such affaires, and the cost of all the owners and the same with all Mills and such like works shall be improved in, or by such a lay or hiring out of the same as shall be judged most beneficial by the major part of the owners, from time to time and at all times for ever.

Also, we hereby bind and oblige ourselves, our heirs and assigns each unto each other, that we will truly and faithfully observe

keep, and perform each and every of the articles included in this paper, and we mutually agree that whoever of us said parties, do not faithfully comply with and fulfill their respective promises here in agreed on, shall forfeit and pay unto the other owners, the sum of 50 pounds in money on the Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England so often as the same is not by any of us, our heirs or assigns complied with, forever. And we also agree that this instrument shall be recorded on Duxbury Town records, and there to remain forever, so that all whom it may concern may know where to find the same, and in testimony here of, we the said parties have set our hands and seals the day and year as mentioned on other side-

John Southworth (s)

George Partridge (s)

Joshua Delanoe (s)

Eleazor Harlow (s)

in presence of

Abishai Soule

Abigail Soule.

Duxbury Records,

1746  
Jany 21.

Record

No.5.

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